
**REPORT TO
LOS ANGELES COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

GENERAL PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

September 2005

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The intent of this report is to demonstrate the County's compliance with the requirements of Government Code Section 65400(b), which mandates the County to prepare an annual report on the status of the General Plan and progress in its implementation. A copy of this report must be sent to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). Providing a copy to HCD fulfills a statutory requirement to report certain housing information, including the County's progress in meeting its share of regional housing needs and local efforts to remove governmental constraints to the development of housing, as defined in Government Code Sections 65584 and 65583(c)(3).

BACKGROUND

According to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, OPR does not require submission of a detailed progress report while a jurisdiction is in the process of comprehensively updating its general plan. In this case, OPR requests that the County provide a brief letter indicating that the comprehensive update is in progress with a brief description of the scope of work and an anticipated completion date. This report is intended to fulfill this requirement.

GENERAL PLAN STATUS

The County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning (Department) serves as the planning agency for the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County, an area of roughly 2,655 square miles. During the late 1990s, a review of the General Plan status was commenced that

led to the preparation of a multi-year work program to update the General Plan. The County's General Plan has not been comprehensively updated since its adoption in 1980.

The Department is currently in the process of comprehensively updating the Los Angeles County General Plan in compliance with Government Code Sections 65300.7, 65301 and 65302. This multi-year planning effort is intended to reflect changing demographic, growth, and infrastructure conditions in the County. It includes streamlining the General Plan's countywide elements into a manageable document, the elimination and/or consolidation of optional elements, the review of critical policy areas, the amendment of associated zoning ordinances, and preparation of an environmental impact report in compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements.

The unincorporated area is a highly diverse and complex planning environment, necessitating a creative approach to planning. Consequently, the General Plan has many components and levels of plans—from the general to the highly detailed—to address the diverse needs of county residents and to address the full range of urban, suburban and rural land use issues facing the County. One way the General Plan addresses complex countywide issues is to encourage infill development in existing urban areas, which serves to reduce urban expansion and maintain open space. Several strategies are being used to implement infill, including encouraging new housing developments along transportation corridors and within Transit Oriented Districts; and increasing allowable urban densities.

The update program focuses on amending the following countywide elements of the General Plan: General Goals and Policies, Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Conservation/Open Space, Noise, and Safety. The program is being conducted in two phases:

Phase I: Housing Element Update and Implementation

The Board of Supervisors adopted a comprehensive revision to the Housing Element on October 23, 2001. On February 13, 2002, the Housing Element was conditionally certified by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) subject to the County demonstrating progress toward implementing housing programs aimed at identifying adequate sites for multi-family housing and farm worker housing assistance. The status of these programs is discussed in more detail in this report.

Phase II: Countywide Elements of the General Plan

The Department is revising and consolidating all countywide elements, except the Housing Element, which was amended in 2001, into the following: Land Use, Circulation, Conservation/Open Space, Noise, and Safety. All State-required components of a general plan will either be included in these elements or adopted by reference.

The Draft General Plan, *Shaping the Future 2025*, was released for public comment in 2004. The document was well received and garnered substantial input during the subsequent five months of public review. In response to public

comment, adjustments to the General Plan update program have been made including, but not limited to, the following:

- The creation of a mixed-use land use category;
- Reevaluation of the County's proposed Significant Ecological Areas Program, including associated zoning code amendments, which will be followed by public workshops to solicit input on the revised program; and
- Increasing the allowable density in all urban residential categories.

The accompanying Environmental Impact Report for the General Plan will address new case law and state mandates that have been enacted in the past year.

An extensive outreach campaign will transpire beginning in 2006; public meetings will be held throughout the county to solicit input on a Preliminary General Plan, followed by public review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report. Public hearings before the Regional Planning Commission and County Board of Supervisors will follow later in the year.

HOUSING ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Overview

Currently, the County of Los Angeles is in compliance with State Housing Element law (Article 10.6 of the Government Code) in that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted the County's Housing Element on October 23, 2001, and HCD has determined that the Housing Element is in compliance, conditioned upon the County completing Housing Action Programs #43 and #44 relating to farm worker housing and identifying adequate sites for multi-family development and related rezoning activities.

The Housing Element contains an ambitious array of programs for implementation. Many programs are implemented by other agencies; therefore, the actual program work may vary from the original target completion dates. This report focuses on the major programs with activity during the last half of 2004 and the first half of 2005, which is the last twelve months of the Housing Element planning period. Information on Housing Action Programs #41, #43, and #44 is reported as of June 30, 2005 to provide an update on the County's progress in implementing these programs.

Second Unit Ordinance Implementation (Program #41)

On March 3, 2004 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance 2004-0012, amending the Los Angeles County Zoning Code with regulations and procedures for the review of second residential units—as required for consistency with State law. The ordinance took effect April 2, 2004 and is included as **Appendix A**. The Department has approved 90 second units during the first 14 months since the ordinance went into effect.

Farm Worker Housing (Program #43)

The County has completed the preparation of a draft ordinance amending the County's Zoning Ordinance to add definitions for farm worker and farm worker housing and to permit farm worker housing by right in agricultural zones. Additional public outreach efforts are needed prior to scheduling the public hearing. It is anticipated that a public hearing before the County's Regional Planning Commission will be held in 2006. When approved by the Commission, the Ordinance will be scheduled for a public hearing before the Board of Supervisors. A copy of the working draft is included as **Appendix B**.

Identifying Adequate Sites for Multi-Family Housing (Program #44)

The Housing Advisory Committee is a key component of the Housing Element's Action Program #44 (Identify Sites for Multi-Family Housing). The Committee is comprised of eighteen citizens and private sector volunteers who are closely related to and interested in the production of affordable housing in the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County. The role of the Committee is to assist the Department of Regional Planning by recommending incentives for, and ways to further remove barriers to, the construction of affordable housing in the unincorporated area, and to identify vacant and underutilized sites that could be used for affordable housing development.

Since its formation in September 2002, the Housing Advisory Committee has convened 15 times, with another meeting scheduled in early November 2005. A list of the Committee's members is included as **Appendix C** and copies of the agendas and notes from the Committee's meetings since July 2004 are included as **Appendix D**.

On June 21, 2005, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion directing the Department to 1) study and make recommendations on options for modifying the County's commercial zones in the unincorporated areas to allow the processing of residential developments and mixed-use projects through an administrative procedure; and 2) consider the different circumstances and different parts of the County that would be applicable, and work with each Supervisorial District's Planning Deputy to take into consideration each District's commercial zones; and 3) report back to the Board with findings, including provisions for maintaining the commercial uses along the County's major commercial corridors. A copy of the completed Board report and the Board's motion are included as **Appendix E**. The Housing Advisory Committee has provided important input to the Board report. The Program #44 rezoning effort will initially focus on finding sites for higher density multi-family housing within areas that are currently zoned for multi-family housing or are commercially zoned, as these areas are likely to be most suitable for accommodating additional residential density.

The Housing Advisory Committee will provide the Department with valuable guidance as the County undertakes the ambitious task of comprehensively identifying infill opportunity sites that may be suitable for inclusion in a rezoning program that will be considered in the future by the Regional Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

HOUSING ELEMENT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting Overview

The County is required to report certain housing information in accordance with state housing law (Government Code Sections 65583 and 65584) and the State HCD's housing element guidelines in reporting the County's progress toward meeting regional housing needs.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) has determined that total housing construction need for the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County is 52,232 housing units for the current planning period of 1998-2005, an annual average of 7,462 units.¹ This level of construction is deemed necessary by the state to meet both the housing needs of projected growth during the period, and to make up for current housing deficiencies of existing residents. This housing need is further segmented into four broad income categories: Very-low income (9,019 units), low income (7,519 units), moderate income (9,859 units), and above-moderate income (25,835 units).

During the seven and a half years of the planning period, from January 1, 1998 to June 30, 2005, the Department of Public Works (DPW) issued building permits for 22,551 dwelling units. The average time between permit issuance and completed construction is estimated at 305 days. The new dwelling units figure is offset by dwelling units removed from the housing stock as authorized by 1,530 demolition permits (the total number of dwelling units authorized for demolition was not available at the time of report preparation). A summary of residential building and demolition permits issued during January 1, 1998-June 30, 2005 is included as **Appendix F**.

Table 1 (on the next page) identifies the additional housing units completed during the reporting period for Housing Element information as compared to the unincorporated County's share of regional housing needs by income level. Table 1 includes very low, low and moderate income housing developments completed from January 1, 1998 through June 30, 2005.² Table 1 also reports that building permits were issued for 22,551 dwelling units during the period January 1, 1998 through June 30, 2005, compared to 52,232 dwelling units needed to meet the county's fair-share requirements for the period January 1, 1998 through June 30, 2005.³ According to the table, the number of additional dwelling units that are still needed during this period is 29,681, or roughly 57 percent of the RHNA allocation.

¹ Refer to Chapter 4 of the Housing Element, adopted on October 23, 2001, for full details on current housing needs as set forth by SCAG in the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) for the planning period January 1, 1998 to June 30, 2005.

² Los Angeles County Community Development Commission, affordable housing development completions data, January 1, 1998-June 30, 2005.

³ County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Building and Safety Division, Unincorporated County Area, Residential Building Permit and Demolition Data, January 1, 1998-June 30, 2005.

TABLE 1 **RHNA CONSTRUCTION NEED AND INCOME DISTRIBUTION, 1998-2005**

Construction Need	Very Low Income Units	Low Income Units	Moderate Income Units	Above Moderate Income Units	Total
Unincorporated Area	9,019	7,519	9,859	25,835	52,232
Number of Dwelling Units Constructed 1/1/98-6/30/05	656	259	3,912	17,724	22,551
Number of new Dwelling Units Still Needed	8,363	7,260	5,947	8,111	29,681

Source: SCAG, *Regional Housing Needs Assessment, 2000*; Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Building & Safety Division for the number of dwelling units assumed to be constructed during the period January 1, 1998-June 30, 2005; Los Angeles County Community Development Commission affordable housing development completions, January 1, 1998-June 30, 2005. Income categories based on a household of four members and the area median income which is annually revised according to the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.

Affordable Housing Completed During the Planning Period

According to the Los Angeles County Community Development Commission, 936 new income-restricted affordable dwelling units were constructed in the unincorporated area from January 1, 1998 – June 30, 2005. Of these units, 259 are affordable to low-income households, 656 are affordable to very-low income households, and 21 units are affordable to moderate-income households. It should be noted that in Table 1, the 21 moderate-income units are included in the 3,912 moderate-income units constructed during the period January 1, 1998 - June 30, 2005.

Development Approvals Summary

During the period January 1, 1998, through June 30, 2005, the County issued discretionary approvals for 258 residential development projects totaling 17,681 dwelling units (the 17,681 figure differs from the 22,551 dwelling units constructed in that the constructed units also include ministerial/non-discretionary project approvals and also may have resulted from planning and building approvals issued prior to 1998). This figure includes 17 projects totaling 335 units that were approved by the County for affordable housing developments (with low- and very-low income affordability restrictions).

Although the County is currently working with its Housing Advisory Committee to craft regulatory strategies that facilitate and provide increased incentives for affordable and market-rate housing, the Committee has recognized that even under the best-case scenario, the 52,232-unit RHNA allocation is unattainable. The overall RHNA construction target for the Los Angeles County unincorporated area is unrealistic considering that even if the County had been in the position to complete the major task of adopting major regulatory changes to double the annual average number of housing units permitted for the entire 7.5-year planning period, this

would have accomplished only 86 percent of the RHNA allocation. This scenario illustrates that other market factors are at work that are non-regulatory in nature and not under the County's control that significantly impact the pace of new housing construction.

ADDITIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTIVITIES

Green Line Transit Oriented District (TOD)

The Green Line Transit Oriented District (TOD) ordinance was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 25, 2005. The purpose of the Green Line TOD is to establish a new framework for development in the District within roughly one-quarter mile from the Vermont Avenue and Hawthorne Boulevard Green Line Transit Stations. The Green Line TOD promotes a walkable environment that supports transit and provides regulatory incentives and community-oriented development standards that attract pedestrian-oriented, neighborhood-serving commercial uses, and high-quality affordable housing to the District, thereby promoting convenient, vibrant, and cohesive transit-oriented neighborhoods.

The Green Line TOD also encourages revitalization by promoting mixed-use development through an administrative procedure and reduced parking requirements to support transit ridership within the District.

A copy of the Green Line TOD ordinance is included as **Appendix G**.

Green Line TOD Infill Estimation Study

Following up on the development of an infill estimation methodology through the County's participation in a collaborative effort led by Environment Now, their consultants (Solimar Research Group and Terrell Watt Consulting) and the City of Los Angeles, the Second Supervisorial District supported the use of this methodology in evaluating the infill potential within the Green Line TOD area. The study, prepared by Solimar Research Group, evaluated the potential within both the Hawthorne Station and Vermont Station TOD areas, and evaluated the efficacy of the ordinance and concluded that there is significant infill potential within both TOD areas. A copy of the study is included as **Appendix H**.

Los Angeles County Urban Infill Estimation Project (Sponsored by SCAG)

Encouraged by the positive results of the Green Line TOD Infill Estimation Study, the Second Supervisorial District has supported the Department's work with the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) on an ambitious SCAG-funded study to evaluate the infill potential within urban unincorporated areas within the County of Los Angeles. The Scope of Work for the *Los Angeles County Urban Infill Estimation Project* is included in **Appendix I**.

Density Bonus Ordinance Update

The passage of SB1818 (Chapter 928, Statutes of 2004, effective January 1, 2005) which significantly revised the State's affordable housing density bonus law (Section 65915 of the California Government Code) poses an opportunity for the County to update its affordable housing density bonus provisions. On January 26, 2005, the Regional Planning Commission instructed the Department to commence the preparation of an ordinance amending the appropriate sections of the County Code in a manner that is consistent with the changes to State density bonus law. The Regional Planning Commission held a public hearing on June 22, 2005, and will meet again on October 26, 2005 to discuss possible minor adjustments to the draft ordinance prior to making a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. A copy of the draft density bonus ordinance is included in **Appendix J**. The Department has also developed "interim guidelines" which contain instructions for guiding the County as it implements the changes to State law while the ordinance is in the process of being amended. A copy of the Affordable Housing Density Bonus Interim Guidelines is included in **Appendix K**.

Infill Sites Utilization Program

On August 3, 2004, the Board of Supervisors approved the County's Infill Sites Utilization Program which is administered by the County of Los Angeles Community Development Commission (CDC).

The Infill Program is designed to streamline the delivery of housing for low and moderate income families in Los Angeles County. The CDC, in conjunction with the Housing Authority's Industry Program, may authorize the acquisition, lease or sale of infill sites of no more than four units in each. The Program will serve to provide more housing opportunities for low- and moderate- income families, to make more efficient the delivery of smaller development and acquisition/rehabilitation projects and to assist in eliminating blight. The Infill Program encompasses a variety of improved and unimproved sites.⁴ The CDC is currently in the process of preparing a status report to the Board regarding the program that will be submitted in the upcoming months. A copy of the Infill Sites Utilization Program is included as **Appendix L**.

Special Needs Housing Alliance

In March 2005, the Department of Regional Planning became a member of the Special Needs Housing Alliance, an interdepartmental task force dedicated to mobilizing resources and political support to address special housing needs within the County. The role of the Department has been to provide insight into the housing crisis in the unincorporated areas as well as to connect

⁴ Derived from recommendations from Carlos Jackson, Los Angeles Community Development Commission, to the LA County Board of Supervisors, Board of Commissioners - Community Development Commission and Board of Commissioners - Los Angeles County Housing Authority, August 3, 2004.
<http://lacounty.info/bos/sop/supdocs/13361.pdf>

the Department's regulatory efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing to other departments' efforts to address special housing needs. In the coming months, the Special Needs Housing Alliance, which includes the Department of Social Services, the Department of Mental Health and the Community Development Commission, will present the Board of Supervisors with a strategic plan that guides County efforts to provide housing, operational subsidies, and supportive services for the County's special needs populations, in particular emancipated youth, people with HIV/AIDS and people with mental disabilities. The Department of Regional Planning is also involved in working groups organized by the CAO to eradicate homelessness, including *Bring Los Angeles Home*—a blue ribbon panel composed of more than 60 political and civic leaders staffed by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority and the Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness. The Department would be involved in the implementation of the strategic plan once the plan is adopted by the Board.

SUMMARY

The annual report provides information on the status of the County's General Plan and progress toward its implementation. This report also complies with the requirements of State law regarding the preparation and submission of General Plan annual reports. The Department will keep you informed in the upcoming months of the County's progress in implementing the major programs discussed in this report.

JEH:jtm

Enclosures:

- Appendix A – Second Unit Ordinance
- Appendix B – Working Draft of Farm Worker Housing Ordinance
- Appendix C – Housing Advisory Committee Roster
- Appendix D – Housing Advisory Committee Agendas and Meeting Notes
- Appendix E – Board Report on Mixed Use Development and the Board's Motion
- Appendix F – Residential Building/Demolition Permits January 1, 1998 - June 30, 2005
- Appendix G – Green Line TOD Ordinance
- Appendix H – Green Line TOD Infill Estimation Study
- Appendix I – Work Scope for SCAG-Funded L.A. County Urban Infill Estimation Project
- Appendix J – Draft Density Bonus Ordinance
- Appendix K – Affordable Housing Density Bonuses – Interim Guidelines
- Appendix L – Infill Sites Utilization Program